

ENFIELD REVITALIZATION STRATEGY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 2016 - REGULAR MEETING
ENFIELD TOWN HALL – ENFIELD ROOM
820 ENFIELD STREET, ENFIELD, CT 06082

A Regular Meeting of the Enfield Revitalization Strategy Committee was held on Thursday, September 22, 2016, at the Enfield Town Hall, Enfield Room, 820 Enfield Street, Enfield, Connecticut

CALLED TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 pm by Chair, Earl Stallings.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Earl Stallings, Jerry Fitzsimons, Connie Provencher, Colleen Reidy, Vice-Chair Ken Edgar, William "Red" Edgar, Town Council, John Foxx (arrived 7:30).

ALSO PRESENT

Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary.

ABSENT

Michael Scalzo, Linda DeGray, Mary Scutt, Planning & Zoning, Teri Anderson, Bill Lee, Town Council, Jennifer Bruyette, Brent Cizek, John Foxx, Brittany Heisler, and Michelle Lewandowski, Peter Bryanton, Director of Community Development,.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Tabled until next meeting due to lack of quorum.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Thompsonville Action Plan: Welcome Guide Draft**
Members reviewed the rough draft guide prepared by Peter Bryanton and discussed the creation of a professional printed publication and ideas for distribution, where visitors could obtain a copy. In particular, a digital version would be beneficial. Members discussed sharing the guide with the Thompsonville cemetery association and perhaps including some cemetery information in the guide (i.e. Civil War graves). Jerry suggested the possibility of using business ads in the guide to help support the costs and to encourage local business participation. Once points of interest are identified within the guide, they should also be marked in place so they're readily noticeable by residents/visitors. Members were asked to review and then email any additions/changes to Earl and Peter, and then they'll compile a list and pick the most important ideas to move forward with. Members discussed utilizing some old historical record books to help with the history/trivia portions of the guide.
- **Rebuilding Downtown Publication**
The first section of this publication talks about engaging public opinion and participation in the revitalization process. The biggest obstacle faced with Thompsonville is perception. The ultimate goal is a good idea that supports the community and is somewhat outside the box. The more outside the box an idea is the more resistance it faces. We need to help people see the benefits and get on board with revitalization and the train station. The train station will increase the activity level and the perceptions will change as things develop.

Connie voiced her frustration about the lack of change over many years within Thompsonville. Ken stated the group did push for public transit and supported the Magic Carpet bus line. He stated we've been able to obtain grants for studies, but then things don't move forward from there. Members discussed the need to attract more taxpaying businesses to town to help alleviate the residents' tax burdens. In particular, Enfield needs to offer more for young families. Members discussed Planning & Zoning (P&Z) role, and that P&Z has not been business friendly, so businesses are reluctant to move in. Red stated that P&Z is turning around with Roger O'Brien's arrival and the planning office is friendlier and providing guidance to applicants prior to their attendance at P&Z meetings. Earl said the University of Hartford's Business Development Center provides free business consulting services through volunteer advisors and thought Enfield could create something similar to help new businesses through the P&Z process. Colleen suggested this could build on the town's BITI program. Members discussed the importance of citizens going to public hearings and P&Z meetings to express their concerns about P&Z actions, as the Town Council does appointments to the commission only and has no other input/control. When considering applications, P&Z has to look at what is good for the town as a whole versus the neighborhood the business will be located in, within what the regulations and laws allow or don't allow. From a single developer, new business is viewed separately from the status of any existing properties they have. The Property Maintenance Inspectors are enforcing the ordinances on any vacant and undeveloped properties. Members voiced frustration over commercial property owners who do the minimum in maintaining their vacant developments. Members discussed the appearance of the property around Exit 49 off 91 – that it's not kept up well, it's drab and uninviting to visitors. Many of the signs on 91 don't state "Enfield"; they state village and other names. Perhaps we can get the signage changed.

The retail centers in Enfield aside from the mall itself are thriving but the perception is that all Enfield retail is failing because of the mall. Town staff and the Economic Development Commission are in talks with the mall people about issues and getting tenants in. Part of the problem is that the anchor stores are individually owned and not owned by the mall. Reinvestment is starting to happen. The property is zoned for potential mixed use, so residential or other mixed uses could be added to better benefit the community. John Foxx stated his belief the town should rebid for the casino to alert potential investors to the value of that property. We already have the infrastructure to support a venue in that location. Ken stated there is only so much money to go around for casinos and Enfield is too close to the Springfield casino. The mall owners could still submit a bid even without the town's support.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Member Discussions**

Ken attended Peter's tour of the train station with the state officials. The state staff and consultants were enthused about the location but stated they'll contact Amtrak about some structural concerns such as the Asnuntuck bridge. Members believe the station will be used. John stated that commuter expenses are being offered as pretax incentives with insurance companies and government support.

Connie is working on the project of having Lego monuments throughout town.

Way signage is lacking in town, though the parking signs have been done. Colleen is frustrated that many residents aren't aware of what businesses are located in Thompsonville. Jerry agreed additional advertising is necessary but you can't do way signage for every single business. Earl

stated we need to take advantage of digital technology and perhaps have an app that could, for example, list restaurants by distance. Businesses would have to register, but the digital aspect keeps up with changing and new businesses. John suggested the cartoon/tourist style map could help visitors to visualize Thompsonville and would be paid for by businesses through advertising. John will look into how this could be done.

Jerry suggested inviting the new Executive Director of the Chamber of Commerce to a meeting now that they're back in Enfield to get the Chamber's feedback on the advertising and marketing ideas members brought forward.

Earl wants members to think of alternate locations where meetings can be held in order to encourage communities to participate. Members discussed holding the November/December meeting at the North Thompsonville Fire House. Connie would like a blurb in the paper encouraging local businesses to attend. Also see if town staff has email/mail contact information for local businesses, specifically North Thompsonville businesses for this meeting.

REPORT OF TOWN STAFF, Peter Bryanton

- Peter was not in attendance but provided a "Projects and Activities" report handout for members to review.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Steve Cogtella, 2 S River Street – Mr. Cogtella stated his frustration that the town seems to bend over backwards to help developers with new business and zone changes, etc., who are not in good standing with the town, for example owing a lot in back taxes. It should match the policy of not being able to register a vehicle until all back taxes are paid.

COMMITTEE COMMUNICATIONS

- Earl asked members to focus on ideas for the guidebook for the December meeting, and to look at other items we can focus on moving forward from the action plan.
- Members will attend the Chamber of Commerce's Business and Economic Symposium on October 27, 2016 in lieu of the regular October meeting.
- November/December meetings will be combined due to holidays and tentatively held on Thursday, December 1, 2016.

ADJOURNMENT

- A motion was made by Colleen Reidy seconded by Ken Edgar to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 8:06 pm.

Submitted by:

Dawn Hunt, Community Development Secretary

Approved by:

Earl Stallings, Chairman

Signature _____ **Date** _____